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PROGRAMME OF WORK ON METHODOLOGIES

Progress report

Note by the secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. At its sixth session, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) provided guidance to the secretariat concerning the work programme on methodologies and it requested the secretariat to report on progress related to its work programme (FCCC/SBSTA/1997/6, paras. 27-35).

2. At its seventh session, the SBSTA requested the secretariat to analyse information on best available greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory methodologies submitted by Parties and assess the adequacy of information and the implications for meeting emission limitation or reduction objectives, drawing on the roster of experts. It also requested the secretariat to prepare a list of methodological issues identified while processing national GHG inventories and in the course of in-depth reviews, taking into account the submissions of Parties, for consideration at its ninth session (FCCC/SBSTA/1997/14, para. 16 (a),(b),(c)).

3. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), at its seventh session, requested the secretariat to evaluate the feasibility of compiling and maintaining available supplementary data from authoritative sources on GHG emissions for the purpose of comparison with national submissions and to present a report on this comparison at its ninth session (FCCC/SBI/1997/21, para. 11 (d)).

B. Scope of the note

4. This note provides a progress report on the work programme of the secretariat related to methodologies, particularly for GHG inventories. The information to be developed through the work programme is intended to respond to the priorities identified at the sixth session of the SBSTA. It is also intended for use by the SBSTA as it considers possible additions and/or amendments to the UNFCCC guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Annex I Parties. The activities reported in this note are also relevant to the preparatory work for the first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP). For example, the SBSTA may find the information helpful when it considers guidelines for national systems to account for greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks. However, many aspects of the Kyoto Protocol extend beyond the current programme of work. Methodological issues on land-use change and forestry are discussed in document FCCC/SBSTA/1998/INF.1.

C. Background

5. Regarding the work programme on methodological issues to be conducted by the secretariat in this biennium, the SBSTA, at its sixth session, decided:

(a) The highest priority should be given to activities related to the application of the methods for GHG inventories and that high priority should be given to projections of GHG emissions and sinks; and

(b) Priority should also be given to methods for evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness and effects of specific policies and measures and for assessing adaptation strategies and technologies (FCCC/SBSTA/1997/6, para. 29).

6. The Kyoto Protocol includes a number of requirements for methodologies and/or guidelines to be adopted by COP/MOP 1, for example, in its Articles 3.4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 12. In addition, consideration of guidelines relating to certain Articles (Articles 3.4, 6 and 17) is to be undertaken at COP 4 (see decision 1/CP.3, subparas. 5 (a), (b) and (c) (FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1). A complete list of tasks to be carried out by COP/MOP 1 is contained in document FCCC/SB/1998/1. FCCC/SB/1998/2, FCCC/SB/1998/MISC.1 and FCCC/ SBSTA/1998/INF.1 provide additional information.

D. Possible action by the SBSTA

7. The SBSTA may wish to take note of the documents described in the following sections, bearing in mind their relationship to possible additions and/or amendments to the UNFCCC guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Annex I Parties. In the light of this, it may wish to:

(a) Provide comments on specific information needs to the secretariat; and

(b) Urge those Annex I Parties that have not already done so, to cooperate with the secretariat by providing information both on possible approaches to resolving methodological issues and on "best" methods used by Parties for the estimation of greenhouse gas emissions from sources and removals by sinks.

8. The SBSTA may wish to consider the relationship between the current programme of work on methodologies and the long-term needs related to the Kyoto Protocol. In so doing, it may wish to identify a preliminary listing of tasks and a schedule, bearing in mind the resources available to the secretariat during the current biennium.

II. STATUS OF THE ACTIVITIES UNDER WAY TO IMPLEMENT THE TASKS OF THE WORK PROGRAMME ON METHODOLOGIES

A. Greenhouse gas inventories and projections of greenhouse gas emissions and sinks

9. A principal objective of the secretariat activities related to GHG inventories is to make available information for use by the SBSTA as it considers possible additions and/or amendments to UNFCCC guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Annex I Parties (FCCC/SBSTA/1998/3). The information could also be an input to preparatory work for COP/MOP 1, including, for example, the design of national systems for the estimation of anthropogenic GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks and issues related to verification.

10. The secretariat will prepare a number of documents for the ninth session. The main document will focus on methodological issues identified while processing national GHG inventories and in the course of in-depth reviews, taking into account the submissions from Parties. The document will include "policy" options for addressing the issues, for example those involving GHG inventories. The document will integrate and draw on several documents, namely:

(a) A report on "technical" issues related to methodologies identified while analysing second national communications. This report will be prepared by the secretariat as part of the compilation and synthesis of the second national communications from Annex I Parties (decision 6/CP.3). Attention will be given to GHG inventories and, to the extent feasible, to other methodological topics. The document generally will follow the structure and approach used in the annex to document FCCC/SBI/1997/19. It will include the information from Parties that had not submitted their communications when the first compilation and synthesis of second national communications from Annex I Parties was being prepared. A comparison between national methods and different tiers of the Revised 1996 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories will be included in the report. Relevant information from in-depth reviews of national communications from Annex I Parties will also be included.

(b) A synthesis report on the best methods identified by Parties as of June 1998. The report will be provided for a review by experts nominated by governments to the roster, as required by the SBSTA at its seventh session (FCCC/SBSTA/1997/14, para. 16 (b)). The secretariat will also make available submissions by Parties on this subject in a miscellaneous document.

11. The secretariat has compiled submissions from Parties on possible approaches to resolving the methodological issues identified in the second national communications. The submissions from Parties may be found in document FCCC/SBSTA/1998/MISC.2.

12. At its ninth session, the SBSTA may also have information from other bodies such as the IPCC/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/International Energy Agency (IEA) programme on GHG inventories. It is anticipated that a report of a meeting on inventory quality, sponsored by the IPCC/OECD/IEA programme, may be available.

13. In a related activity, the secretariat will organize a workshop in the fall of 1998, in coordination with the IPCC, to enable non-Annex I Parties to exchange experience on emission factors and activity data for the preparation of GHG inventories. The outcome of this workshop will provide information for a report on the gaps faced by developing countries in the preparation of GHG inventories, as requested by the SBSTA at its seventh session (FCCC/SBSTA/1997/14, para. 21 (e)).

14. In another related activity, the secretariat, as requested by the SBI at its seventh session, is evaluating the feasibility of compiling and maintaining available supplementary data from authoritative sources on GHG emissions for the purpose of comparison with national submissions (FCCC/SBI/1997/21, para. 11 (d)). The secretariat will prepare a technical paper on this subject for the ninth session of the SBI.

15. No submissions were received from Parties on priority areas and options for work on projections, as requested at the sixth session of the SBSTA. The secretariat will organize and carry out its work on this matter in the biennium 1998-1999, according to the programme of work on methodologies presented at the sixth session of the SBSTA (FCCC/SB/1997/INF.2), with the objective of improving the reporting and transparency of emission projections by Annex I Parties and of identifying a set of tools for use by non-Annex I Parties that choose to apply them in preparing national communications.

B. Adaptation methodologies

16. By its decision 9/CP.3, para. 2 (a), the COP requested the secretariat "to continue its work on the synthesis and dissemination of information on environmentally sound technologies and know-how conducive to mitigating, and adapting to, climate change; for example, by accelerating the development of methodologies for adaptation technologies, in particular decision tools to evaluate alternative adaptation strategies, bearing in mind the work programme on methodological issues approved by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice at its sixth session".

17. The secretariat has started to collect information on adaptation methods, particularly decision tools. It will consider the activities of both the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the IPCC as it undertakes its work. For example, the UNEP, with the cooperation of the University of Amsterdam, is developing methods for climate change impact assessment and adaptation strategies. An update of the first draft of the joint UNEP/University of Amsterdam handbook on methods for climate change impact assessment and adaptation strategies is due to be published in the summer of 1998.

18. In a related activity, the IPCC held a workshop on adaptation to climate variability and change, in Costa Rica, from 29 March to 1 April 1998. The purpose of this workshop was to understand the current state of knowledge on adaptation science and the conditions under which adaptation can reduce vulnerability to climate change, and to develop an assessment framework for adaptation for possible use in the IPCC Third Assessment Report. The report of the meeting, when available, could be considered by the SBSTA.

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